



# The STEWARD

North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation  
*[www.ncsparks.net](http://www.ncsparks.net) for State Parks Info and Events*

Michael F. Easley  
Governor

September 2006

Volume 20 Number 6

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## STATE PARKS MARK 90TH YEAR

In the 90<sup>th</sup> year of the system's existence, millions of visitors continue to flock to state parks. Many will notice some new facilities and more acreage protected in them, but most probably don't realize how far the state parks system has come in a very short period of time.

In May 1991, state and national officials, local dignitaries and citizens gathered at the summit of Mount Mitchell to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the North Carolina state parks system, the first in the Southeast.

They also used the opportunity to commiserate about the system's woeful funding situation and widespread land acquisition and capital development needs.

At the event, then-Governor Jim Martin challenged North Carolinians to live up to the legacy left by those who began the state parks system when they rallied together to prevent logging that was devastating the landscape surrounding Mount Mitchell, the highest peak east of the Mississippi.

In 2006, as the state parks system celebrates its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the story reads differently than it did just 15 years ago.

Citizens, legislators and state and local government officials heeded the call and took action.

The movement to provide greater support for the state parks system blossomed in 1993 when voters overwhelmingly approved a \$35 million bond referendum to support capital improvement projects in the state parks.

While greatly appreciated, the \$35 million barely scratched the surface of the state parks system needs. State and local officials then went to work on identifying the multi-million dollar parks and recreation needs faced by local governments with



*Anniversary 'scrapbook' being distributed.*

swelling populations. Bolstered by the overwhelming public support for the referendum, parks and recreation professionals at the state and local levels joined together in educating the General Assembly about the need to create a steady funding source for the ever-increasing land acquisition and facility needs in parks across the state.

The effort found a receptive audience in state lawmakers. The 1994 General Assembly established the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) to fund improvements in the state's park system, to fund grants for local governments and to increase the public's access to the state's beaches. The Parks and Recreation Authority, an 11-member appointed board, was also created to allocate funds from PARTF to the state parks and to the grants program for local governments.

PARTF is the primary source of funding to build and renovate facilities in the state parks as well as to buy land for new and existing parks.

The program also provides dollar-for-dollar

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Department of Environment and Natural Resources

# MANAGERS MAP PARKS STRATEGIES

Among top priorities for the coming year for the state parks system's administration will be smoothing bumps in the hiring process and further defining roles and responsibilities

in the wake of reorganization in early 2006.

Improvements in communications and training opportunities also ranked high as about two dozen program

managers, administrators and district superintendents met for a two-day strategic planning session August 10-11 at The Summit at Haw River State Park.

The session was launched by listing some of the division's accomplishments in the past year, along with a frank discussion of some of its disappointments.

"We've had a lot of successes in the past year. Your pushing and pulling and pushing and pulling was the reason we've been successful," Lewis Ledford, division director, told the group of administrators. "I can look around the room and talk about the good work each one of you is doing."

Some of the division accomplishments listed were:

- The authorization of new state parks and new state natural areas.

- A list of more than 40 new land acquisitions and dozens of active capital projects.

- The development of successful partnerships with other agencies, local governments and non-profit conservation organizations.

- The addition of new administrative staff, including an assistant director, and development of the natural resources staff.

- Continued strong support by the General Assembly, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the public.

- The popular local grant program of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

In some cases, the work groups suggested task forces to attack thorny issues over the long term.

## From The Director's Desk

There are those that might wonder what really goes on in the administrative offices of the state parks system in Raleigh's Archdale Building. And, it's a fair question. Actually, planning is always a large part of the work, whether it's planning for a new biennial budget, for the next round of law enforcement training, for the next cycle of trust fund grants or for the next potential land acquisition. Planning for the future seems to infuse nearly all of our programs.

That's why it was so useful for our administrative staff to get out of the Archdale Building to The Summit environmental education center for a couple of days last month. With the help of facilitator Susan McLean, everyone bent their brainpower toward identifying issues that we need to address in the next year and to began brainstorming about how to tackle them.

This was the second year that we've approached long-range planning in just this fashion, and I like to think we're getting better at it and will continue to improve our skills. It's an important part of making a more effective organization and that should lead to a better state parks system for all our citizens and visitors.

On a related note, kudos go to the maintenance staff volunteers from across the state who spent time at The Summit a few weeks earlier tackling some building repairs, tree trimming and installations. Their hard work was noticed and appreciated. Our thanks go also to the park staffs that helped make time for these volunteers to work there. It was teamwork throughout.

I would be remiss if I did not provide you with a brief update on the Chimney Rock Park discussions. As of this writing, the State Property Office and I continue to negotiate with the Morse family, owners of Chimney Rock Park, about the potential for adding that landmark to Hickory Nut Gorge State Park. It has taken a considerable amount of my time and attention recently. There have been encouraging discussions with our partners in the conservation community, and I'm hopeful the Morse family will continue to consider our proposals.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

# SIX NEW RANGERS GET COMMISSIONS

Six new state park rangers received commissions as law enforcement officers at an Aug. 9 ceremony at the state parks system's administrative offices in Raleigh.

The six who received commissions as special peace officers are: Adam Emerson Carver at Falls Lake State Recreation Area; Jamie Brooke Anderson at Crowders Mountain State Park; Stephen Richard Tillotson at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area; Signa Bumgardner Williams at Dismal Swamp State Natural Area; Jerry Douglas Lequire at Pettigrew State Park; and, Edward Ray Wilkerson at Medoc Mountain State Park.

Receiving a commission at the end of 17-week basic law enforcement training is generally regarded as the last formal step before a ranger takes on full duties in a unit of the state parks system. During the training period prior to commissioning, a ranger is assimilated into the park and begins assuming duties in resource management and visitor service.

Susan Tillotson, chief of operations, noted that several of the rangers received honors in their respective basic law enforcement training classes.

Anderson, Tillotson and Williams all received top academic honors. Anderson won a leadership award. Lequire collected marksmanship and physical fitness awards. And,



## PARTNERS WITH REI

*Chip Coviello, the manager of Recreation Equipment Inc.'s new store in Pineville congratulates Larry Hyde, superintendent of Crowders Mountain State Park, on a \$10,000 grant from the company. It will be used to recreate a section of piedmont savanna at the park. REI presented grants this year to Falls Lake State Recreation Area as well as Crowders Mountain, Eno River and William B. Umstead state parks.*



*Six rangers took the oath as special peace officers at the Archdale Building in August.*

Wilkerson, along with marksmanship and driving awards, was selected as outstanding overall cadet.

"We want to commend all of you on those achievements. We are very, very proud of you," Tillotson said.

Lewis Ledford, director of the Division of Parks and Recreation, told the newly commissioned rangers that two of the hallmarks of a good park ranger are the ability to adapt using all the varied training that rangers possess and the ability to keep the state parks mission as a focal point when working day to day.

"We're doing so much growing it's almost painful," Ledford said, noting the number of new state parks and state natural areas that are being created. "North Carolina state parks is one of the more unique among natural resource agencies because we're growing so fast."

Don Reuter, assistant director of the division, said that a recent visit to Fort Macon State Park reminded him just how varied and demanding a ranger's job is, but that the state parks system is a part of state government that truly touches citizens' lives.

"It's all about making a difference. My feeling is I could make a difference here and I hope all of you approach your careers in state government that way," he said.

Each of the rangers had a special reason for choosing the job, said Billy Totten, north district superintendent. A common thread is passion, Totten said, but passion for the job is not enough. A state park ranger almost needs an obsession for the job.

"Your true mission is the mission of the heart you have, being able to relate to the people what state parks mean to you," he said.



# BANDING TAKES PULSE OF BIRD HABITAT

Birders know it.

Coal miners who carried the proverbial canaries below ground a century ago knew it.

Birds really are outstanding barometers of man's environment.

That's why Brian Strong is taking a long, hard stare at the colorful and diminutive prothonotary warbler he's holding in his hand at Eno River State Park. Strong weighs it, measures it, blows on its feathers to try to determine their age and attaches a tiny metal band to signify its capture.

Normally a bird that prefers marsh habitat, it's a surprising find. It's also surprisingly mature and it's staring long and hard back at Strong.

Eventually, Strong opens his hand and the two part company.

Strong, chief of the state parks system's natural resources program, had captured the warbler in a mist net near the Eno River early on a summer morning during one of nine bird-banding sessions this year. He's in his third year of a project that is expected to last at least five years to establish baseline data about the state park's bird population.

*Strong, right, measures and weighs the birds and estimates their age before releasing them. A prothonotary warbler, below, was a surprising find.*



*Strong frees a Carolina wren from a mist net at Eno River.*



Over time and by following a somewhat rigid research protocol, the banded birds can yield clues about the health of the state park habitat, and how it compares to others in the state and the nation.

"You can make a lot of good estimates about the habitat by the types of birds that nest here and their age classes," Strong said. "For instance, younger birds typically are found in poorer hab-

itat. Mature birds are smarter."

Strong's data will be contributed through the MAPS program (Monitoring Avian Population Survivorship) to the Institute for Bird Populations, a research organization that maintains an internet-based sink for data from study points around the nation.

There are a half-dozen study sites in North Carolina. Generally, researchers have spread the program slowly, teaching others in missionary fashion.

Strong has had other resource specialists and park

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rangers helping him during some of the collecting sessions and one of his aims is to spread the research to other state parks.

"A state park is just a neat place to collect data," he said. "It's going to be here a long time and you can watch trends develop."

During each of the sessions, Strong and his helpers spread 11 mist nets, each measuring eight feet by 40 feet. Four are close to the river, four are in upland areas and three are within a power line cut. Each net is checked every 40 minutes.

"One reason I chose this place is because it has good ripar-

ian area and we have 500 acres of upland behind us. It's really good habitat in both upper and lower types of terrain," Strong said.

Collecting sessions begin in May, and usually about a dozen birds are caught and banded each day. This year, the first day's catch yielded almost 40 birds. Slightly more birds have been banded this year than in the past two years.

A few wriggle free of the nets and some that appear stressed when caught are immediately released and not banded. Hummingbirds can't be banded so they're released as well. The sessions are usually halted in the

heat of mid-day.

This year, about a quarter of the netted birds were recaptures of ones already banded.

Long-term, data from bird banding may be useful in deciding what resource management techniques work well, and it could even be one of many factors in determining the quality and value of land being considered for acquisition for state parks, Strong said.

"When we look at buying land, we need to have good rationales about why the state should purchase or not purchase it," he said.

## 90TH ANNIVERSARY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

grants of now up to \$500,000 to local governments. Recipients use the grants to acquire land and/or to develop parks and recreational projects that serve the general public.

The trust fund has been used by the state parks system to support key land acquisitions and a wide array of construction projects, including visitor centers and exhibit halls, which allow tremendous venues for the system to carry out a key piece of its core mission: providing environmental education.

In the meantime, PARTF has also funded 432 local parks and recreation projects totaling \$74.7 million.

The dedicated funding source has been a shot in the arm for state and local parks, according to Lewis Ledford, director of the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, who helped keep park facilities operational by literally using baling wire and duct tape as a ranger and parks superintendent during the system's more austere years.

"It came to point where our buildings and many of our facilities were unsafe," Ledford said. "The trust fund has allowed us to build first-class facilities that make North Carolinians proud. But we're not standing pat in the state parks system. While we still have a backlog of needs, we are now better positioned to move ahead with new initiatives and opportunities."

The division is moving ahead through its New Parks for a New Century initiative, which has identified sites in the state — among some of the most treasured and threatened natural resources — as potential additions to the state parks system. The current list of 44 sites under consideration includes eight potential state parks, one potential state recreation area and 35 potential state natural areas.

The new initiative has led to the creation of four new state parks: Hickory Nut Gorge in Rutherford County, Carvers Creek in Cumberland County and the Haw River and Mayo

River in the piedmont; and five additional state natural areas: Elk Knob in Watauga and Ashe counties, Lower Haw in Chatham County, Beech Creek Bog in Avery County, the Mountain Bog Cluster in Avery County and Sandy Run Savannas in Onslow County (these last two authorized during the recent legislative session).

With the state's population expected to grow by 50 percent over the next 20 years, North Carolina's existing and new state parks will be in high demand and annual visitation, which topped 13 million in 2005, will continue to increase.

"The North Carolina state parks system has long been known for its outstanding natural resources," Ledford said. "But over the last 15 years we've made great strides to better manage those resources in meeting our mission of conservation, education, providing quality outdoor recreation and encouraging and exemplifying good stewardship. Now, we can offer our visitors so much more than just a nice view."



# EXTREME MAKEOVER AT THE SUMMIT

By Johnny Johnson  
East District Maintenance

On July 24, a group of maintenance staff volunteers from across the parks system charged The Summit conference center at Haw River State Park with hammers and chainsaws in hand to assist with maintenance issues at the newly acquired complex.

The week-long operation was planned and coordinated by Jerry Howerton, chief of maintenance, Dwayne Parker, north district maintenance manager and Park Superintendent Sue McBean.

Repairs for the buildings focused on replacing damaged wood siding and repairing plumbing and electrical problems. Work on the grounds included the installation of benches, grills and picnic tables.



*Maintenance staff came from throughout the parks system to help with chores at The Summit at Haw River State Park.*

Trees were trimmed along roads and around buildings and more than 100 hazardous or dead trees were removed along trails and in other recreation areas.

It could hardly have been hotter or more humid, but there were no complaints.

Everyone just trudged on with sweat sloshing in their boots and clothes dripping wet. These guys served as a great example of what can be accomplished with teamwork.

The volunteers were kept hydrated and well fed by the Summit staff.

Sue McBean, the new superintendent at the park said the crew arrived mentally and physically prepared to work hard.

"They worked through a hot, humid week, remaining cheerful and energetic the whole time," she said. "The staff at Haw River is thankful for the effort of this hard-working crew. The people of North Carolina state parks have always made me proud and this is one example why."

Lending a helping hand were: Wayne Watson, Ronnie Hawks, Charlie Parks, Pete Mitchell, Lloyd Rasmussen, Ken Campbell, Jack Cullipher, Gilbert Cane, David Suggs, John Johnson, Herbert Mathias, Jody Reavis, Andy Griffith, Darrel Richardson, Ray Black and Fitz McMurry.



## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF COUNCIL

*The division's Administrative Staff Council has been reconstituted under officers Pam Dillard, chair, Kelly Chandler, vice chair, and Corliss Baskerville, secretary. Its mission includes addressing issues and concerns of administrative staff, promoting communication between district and field offices, ensuring uniform standards and providing educational opportunities. The council has begun planning for a seminar Oct. 17-19.*

# North Carolina State Parks

## Monthly Attendance Report

### July 2006

PARK	JULY 2006	TOTAL YTD JULY 2006	JULY 2005	TOTAL YTD JULY 2005	% CHANGE (2005/2006)	
					JULY	YTD
CAROLINA BEACH	32,617	148,445	33,090	154,718	-1%	-4%
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE	18,452	67,123	12,931	61,346	43%	9%
CROWDER'S MOUNTAIN	33,634	216,377	29,115	208,280	16%	4%
ENO RIVER	33,596	186,111	32,634	197,209	3%	-6%
FALLS LAKE	157,372	637,996	151,716	584,961	4%	9%
FORT FISHER	134,099	417,242	127,065	460,233	6%	-9%
FORT MACON	223,996	813,672	187,008	761,144	20%	7%
GOOSE CREEK	12,077	64,615	17,089	88,920	-29%	-27%
GORGES	25,051	65,706	25,230	79,509	-1%	-17%
HAMMOCKS BEACH	18,546	78,135	19,089	86,427	-3%	-10%
HANGING ROCK	71,239	267,271	59,857	217,282	19%	23%
HAW RIVER STATE PARK	1,659					
JOCKEY'S RIDGE	183,218	633,774	181,542	600,192	1%	6%
JONES LAKE	9,081	44,261	8,390	48,809	8%	-9%
JORDAN LAKE	173,307	639,901	168,932	953,159	3%	-33%
KERR LAKE	259,312	782,116	272,344	1,118,616	-5%	-30%
LAKE JAMES	90,302	402,533	64,729	249,480	40%	61%
LAKE NORMAN	66,216	310,368	61,350	294,624	8%	5%
LAKE WACCAMAW	12,132	61,030	10,822	56,986	12%	7%
LUMBER RIVER	8,875	45,870	5,950	34,796	49%	32%
MEDOC MOUNTAIN	8,727	32,936	8,340	29,072	5%	13%
MERCHANT'S MILLPOND	17,964	111,011	25,380	138,564	-29%	-20%
MORROW MOUNTAIN	46,700	205,442	33,130	122,090	41%	68%
MOUNT JEFFERSON	14,720	46,812	8,633	42,317	71%	11%
MOUNT MITCHELL	53,376	144,060	43,309	108,071	23%	33%
NEW RIVER	31,844	143,278	25,123	80,883	27%	77%
OCCONEECHEE MOUNTAIN	5,106	34,279	4,802	31,415	6%	9%
PETTIGREW	8,985	45,747	9,519	47,112	-6%	-3%
PILOT MOUNTAIN	45,050	218,966	44,683	229,125	1%	-4%
RAVEN ROCK	7,316	57,057	8,736	65,237	-16%	-13%
SINGLETARY LAKE	4,410	22,476	5,838	27,078	-24%	-17%
SOUTH MOUNTAINS	25,100	127,582	18,884	124,344	33%	3%
STONE MOUNTAIN	54,944	237,824	51,852	225,668	6%	5%
WEYMOUTH WOODS	4,035	27,651	3,702	25,852	9%	7%
WILLIAM B. UMSTEAD	62,078	364,267	62,288	355,184	0%	3%
<b>STEMWIDE TOTAL</b>	<b>1,955,136</b>	<b>7,701,934</b>	<b>1,823,102</b>	<b>7,908,703</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>-3%</b>



## ***Our Mission Remains...***

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;

to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources for all citizens and visitors.

*8,000 copies of this public document were printed  
at a cost of \$504.00 or \$0.063 per copy.*



### ***The Steward***

NC Division of Parks and Recreation  
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Raleigh, NC 27699-1615

## ***SAFETY ZONE***

### **Practice Good Housekeeping**

✓A cleaner workplace is a safer workplace. If you make a mess, clean it up immediately.

✓Put tools, parts and supplies away promptly after using them.

✓Never obstruct walkways or access to emergency exits, equipment or shutoffs.

✓Clearly identify unavoidable potential hazards.

✓Clean up as you work rather than waiting until you're done.